



## Maldives

### Country Reports on Human Rights Practices - [2003](#)

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The Republic of Maldives has a parliamentary style of government with a strong executive. The President appoints the Cabinet, members of the judiciary, and one-sixth of the Parliament. The President derives additional influence from his constitutional role as the "Supreme authority to propagate the tenets of Islam." The unicameral legislature or the People's Majlis selects a single presidential nominee who is approved or rejected in a national referendum. President Maumoon Abdul Gayoom was approved for a sixth 5-year term in October. The Majlis must approve all legislation and is empowered to enact legislation without presidential approval. Civil law is subordinate to Shari'a (Islamic law), but civil law generally is applied in criminal and civil cases. The judiciary is subject to executive influence.

The civilian authorities maintained effective control of the security forces. The National Security Service (NSS) includes the armed forces and police. The Director of the NSS reports to the Minister of Defense, a cabinet portfolio which is one of several held by the President. The police division investigates crimes, collects intelligence, makes arrests, and enforces house arrest. Some members of the security forces committed human rights abuses.

The country had a population of approximately 270,000 and had a market-based economy. Tourism and fishing provided employment for more than one-half of the work force. Tourism accounted for approximately 30 percent of government revenues and 70 percent of foreign exchange receipts. Agriculture and manufacturing continued to play a minor role in the economy, which was constrained by a severe shortage of labor and lack of arable land. The economic growth rate was approximately 5 percent.

The Government's human rights record worsened, and it committed abuses. The President's power to appoint members of the Parliament constrains citizens' ability to change their government. There were reports of the abuse of prisoners. The Government continued to impose constraints on freedom of the press. The Government limits freedom of assembly and association, and does not allow the formation of political parties. The law prohibits the practice of any religion other than Islam. Although the Government has undertaken a number of programs addressing women's issues, women faced a variety of legal and social disadvantages. The Government also restricted internationally recognized worker rights.

## RESPECT FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

### Section 1 Respect for the Integrity of the Person, Including Freedom From:

#### a. Arbitrary or Unlawful Deprivation of Life

There were no political killings. However, in January, according to Amnesty International (AI), security forces allegedly beat Ali Shaahir, a prisoner at Maafushi prison, and he later died at a Male' hospital. President Gayoom ordered an investigation, which concluded that childhood health problems had caused Shaahir's death. Security forces killed two inmates, Hassan Eemaan Naseem and Abdulla Amin, during the September 19-20 Maafushi prison uprising. Ali Aslaam, another inmate, later died in the hospital (see Section 1.c.).

#### b. Disappearance

There were no reports of politically motivated disappearances.

#### c. Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman, or Degrading Treatment or Punishment

The law prohibits such practices; however, according to human rights organizations, there were reports of beatings or other mistreatment of persons in police custody during the year. According to human rights organizations, Ibrahim Moosa Luthfee, sentenced in 2002 to life imprisonment (see Section 2.a.), escaped from police custody in late May after being brought to Sri Lanka for medical treatment as a result of alleged mistreatment and harsh conditions while in Maafushi Prison.

Following the September 19-20 Maafushi Prison uprising and later rioting in the streets of the capital, sparked by two prison deaths followed by another death from injuries and enhanced by popular discontent with lack of government responsiveness to public demands, President Gayoom launched two separate inquiries into the incidents. One inquiry was to investigate the civil unrest in Male', and the other with the status of a Presidential Commission was to probe the prison disturbances. While the prison investigation continued, one NSS captain at the prison was held responsible and cashiered from police service, and 12 NSS personnel were fired for their roles in the prison disturbance. At a press conference October 16, the head of the prison investigation indicated that unspecified mistreatment of an inmate who later died sparked the prison riot. (The Deputy Chief of Staff of the NSS also was transferred to another ministry after the civilian riots.)

There were reports of public floggings (which are allowed under Shari'a as interpreted in the country). In July, 5 women imprisoned on drug charges were sentenced to 10 lashes each. In October 2002, 2 women were convicted of engaging in homosexual activity, and were sentenced to 15 lashes each. Punishments generally were limited to fines, compensatory payment, house arrest, imprisonment, or banishment to a remote atoll (see Section 1.d.). The Government generally permitted those who were banished to receive visits by family members.

There were 3 major prisons in the country, with fluctuating populations of approximately 300 inmates at the country's main facility. Prison conditions at the existing facilities generally did not meet international standards, and human rights organizations noted that some prisoners were kept in extremely crowded and unsanitary conditions. The Government surveyed prison facilities in other countries to incorporate international standards and improvements in the reconstruction of the prison. Prisoners were allowed to work and were given the opportunity for regular exercise and recreation. Spouses were allowed privacy during visits with incarcerated partners. Women were held separately from men. Children were held separately from adults. Persons arrested for drug use were sent to a "drug rehabilitation center" on a space available basis.

The Government permitted prison visits by foreign diplomats. It was not known whether visits by human rights observers were permitted during the year.

#### d. Arbitrary Arrest, Detention, or Exile

The Constitution prohibits arbitrary arrest and detention, and unlike in the past when persons were held for long periods without charge, the Government generally respected this prohibition during the year.

Police initiate investigations based on response to written complaints from citizens, police officers, or government officials, or on suspicion of criminal activity. They were not required to obtain arrest warrants. The Attorney General referred cases to the appropriate court based on the results of police investigations. The authorities generally kept the details of a case secret until they were confident that the charges were likely to be upheld.

The 287-officer police force, which functioned as a subset of the NSS, investigated crimes, collected intelligence, made arrests, and enforced house arrest. Neither police corruption nor impunity posed problems during the year. The Government inquiries into the events of September 19-20 had not been concluded at year's end.

A suspect may be detained in prison, remain free, or be placed under house arrest for 15 days during investigations, depending upon the charges. In most cases the suspect is released if not brought to trial within 15 days, but the President may extend pretrial detention for an additional 30 days. Those who are released pending trial may not leave a specific atoll. Within 24 hours of an arrest, an individual must be told of the grounds for the arrest. An individual then can be held for 7 days. If no legal proceedings have been initiated within 7 days, the case is referred to an anonymous 3-member civilian commission, appointed by the President, that can authorize an additional 15 days of detention. After that time, if legal proceedings still have not been initiated, a judge must sanction the continued detention on a monthly basis. There was no provision for bail.

A law effective from December 2002 provides for limited legal assistance to people accused of a criminal offense, but AI alleged that conversations between counsel and accused were conducted in the presence of police. Lawyers can be appointed in civil cases when the complainant and defendant are private individuals. Courts did not provide legal representation for the indigent. Although there is no right to legal counsel during police

interrogation, detainees are granted access to family members. The Government may prohibit access to a telephone and nonfamily visits to those under house arrest. While there have been no reported cases of incommunicado detention in the past few years, the law does not provide safeguards against this abuse.

There were no reports of religious prisoners during the year. The law limits a citizen's right to freedom of expression in order to protect the "basic tenets of Islam." In 2002, according to AI and other sources, four individuals were arrested for distributing Islamist and anti-government literature. By year's end, three of the men were convicted to lengthy prison sentences for extremism and subversion, and the fourth man was released.

There were no further developments in the case of Member of Parliament (M.P.) Abdullah Shakir, arrested in July 2001 and released the following month. International human rights groups claimed that he was arrested for his support of a petition to form political parties in the country (see Section 2.b.), but the Government stated he was arrested on a civil matter, since resolved. There were no reports of the internal exile of citizens during the year.

#### e. Denial of Fair Public Trial

The Constitution does not provide for an independent judiciary, and the judiciary is subject to executive influence. In addition to his authority to review High Court decisions, the President influences the judiciary through his power to appoint and dismiss judges, all of whom serve at his pleasure and are not subject to confirmation by the Majlis. The President also may grant pardons and amnesties.

There are three courts: One for civil matters; one for criminal cases; and one for family and juvenile cases. There is also a High Court in Male', which is independent of the Justice Ministry and which handles a wide range of cases, including politically sensitive ones. The High Court also acts as court of appeals. The President can appoint a five-member advisory council to review High Court rulings. The President also has authority to affirm judgments of the High Court, to order a second hearing, or to overturn the Court's decision.

Most trials are public and conducted by judges and magistrates trained in Islamic, civil, and criminal law. There are no jury trials.

The Constitution provides that an accused person be presumed innocent until proven guilty, and that an accused person has the right to defend himself "in accordance with Shari'a." The judiciary generally enforced these rights. During a trial, the accused also may call witnesses, and be assisted by a lawyer (see Section 1.d.). Judges question the concerned parties and attempt to establish the facts of a case.

Civil law is subordinate to Shari'a, which is applied in situations not covered by civil law as well as in certain matters such as divorce and adultery. Courts adjudicating matrimonial and criminal cases generally do not allow legal counsel in court because, according to a local interpretation of Shari'a, all answers and submissions should come directly from the parties involved. However, the High Court allowed legal counsel in all cases, including those in which the right to counsel was denied in lower court. Under the country's Islamic practice, the testimony of two women equals that of one man in matters involving Shari'a, such as adultery, finance, and inheritance. In other cases, the testimony of men and women are equivalent (see Section 5).

There were no confirmed reports of political prisoners. Human rights organizations continued to allege the existence of political prisoners; however, the Government maintained that these prisoners were convicted of crimes not related to politics.

#### f. Arbitrary Interference with Privacy, Family, Home, or Correspondence

The Constitution prohibits security officials from opening or reading wireless messages, letters, telegrams, or monitoring telephone conversations, "except as expressly provided by law." The Government generally respected these prohibitions in practice. The NSS may open the mail of private citizens and monitor telephone conversations if authorized in the course of a criminal investigation.

Although the Constitution provides that residential premises and dwellings should be inviolable, there is no legal requirement for search or arrest warrants. The Attorney General or a commanding officer of the police must approve the search of private residences.

The government policy to encourage a concentration of the population on the larger islands continued.

## Section 2 Respect for Civil Liberties, Including:

### a. Freedom of Speech and Press

The law does not provide for freedom of speech or of the press, and the Government generally did not respect such rights in practice. The Penal Code prohibits inciting citizens against the Government. The law prohibits public statements that are contrary to government policy and Islam, threaten the public order, or are libelous. However, an amendment to the Penal Code decriminalized "true account(s)" by journalists of governmental actions. Journalists and publishers practiced self-censorship.

Regulations that make publications responsible for the content of the material they publish remain in effect, but no legal actions against publications were initiated during the year.

The Press Council is composed of lawyers, private and government media representatives, and other government officials. The mandate of the council is to review charges of journalistic misconduct (advising the Ministry of Information, Arts, and Culture on measures to be taken against reporters, when appropriate) and promotes professional standards within the media by recommending reforms and making suggestions for improvement. The Council did not take notable action during the year.

Radio and television outlets were owned either by the Government or its sympathizers. Current or former ministers owned all three major newspapers. Nonetheless, these outlets on occasion mildly criticized the Government.

Almost 200 newspapers and periodicals were registered with the Government, but only 3 dailies publish on a regular basis: Aafathis, Haveeru and Miadhu. In 2002, owners closed a weekly magazine, Monday Times, that had printed articles critical of President Gayoom's administration. Despite reports to the contrary, the Government claimed that it had not banned the publication of Monday Times. In March, the Government announced the withdrawal of 22 publication licenses for irregular publication, including the license for the Monday Times. No regularly published newspaper or periodical was affected by this action.

The Government owned and operated the only television and radio stations. It did not interfere with foreign broadcasts or with the sale of satellite receivers. Reports drawn from foreign newscasts were aired on the Government television station.

During the year, there were no reports of government censorship of electronic media. However, in January 2002, three men and one woman were arrested for circulating an Internet e-mail magazine, Sandhaanu, critical of the Government. The four were held in solitary confinement until their trial in July 2002. Three were sentenced to life imprisonment for spreading false news and calling for the overthrow of the Government, among other charges. Fathimath Nisreen, the one woman arrested, was sentenced to 10 years' imprisonment for charges including calling for the overthrow of the Government and assisting Sandhaanu originators. In May, one of those sentenced, Ibrahim Moosa Luthfee, subsequently escaped NSS custody.

Television news and public affairs programming routinely discussed topics of concern and on occasion mildly criticized government performance. Since it is not clear when criticism violates the law prohibiting public statements that were contrary to government policy or Islam, threaten the public, or were libelous, journalists and publishers continued to practice self-censorship. In general, after an easing of restrictions in the late 1990s, the Government has taken a more stringent attitude toward freedom of the media.

There were no legal prohibitions on the import of foreign publications except for those containing pornography or material otherwise deemed objectionable to Islamic values.

The Government was the major shareholder in the sole Internet service provider (ISP), although a license had been granted to a second, private ISP. There were no government attempts, other than blocking pornographic material, to interfere with the use of the Internet during the year.

The law prohibits public statements contrary to government policy and the Government's interpretation of Islam. Therefore, although there were no reported cases of transgressions of these laws in the academic arena, the laws constrain academic freedom to the extent that academics practice self-censorship.

### b. Freedom of Peaceful Assembly and Association

The Constitution provides for freedom of assembly; however, the Government imposed limits on this right in practice. The Home Ministry limited political meetings during electoral campaigns.

On September 20, the NSS reportedly used rubber bullets and tear gas to quell demonstrations that damaged several government buildings in Male', including the election office. (see Section 1.c.). There were reports that several civilians sustained minor injuries as a result of the police action.

In 2001, Mohammed Nasheed lost his seat in the Majlis after he was convicted of petty theft. He was released from internal exile in late August 2002, but was denied his parliamentary seat. Some observers claimed that the theft charge was fabricated to punish Nasheed for supporting a movement to form a political party and for his criticism of President Gayoom's administration (see Section 3).

The Government imposed limits on freedom of association. The Government registers clubs and other private associations if they do not contravene Islamic or civil law. While not prohibited by law, the President officially discouraged political parties on the grounds that they were inappropriate to the homogeneous nature of society, and none exist. In 2001, a group of 42 people petitioned the Minister of Home Affairs to request permission to set up the Maldivian Democratic Party. One signatory to the petition, M.P. Abdullah Shakir, subsequently was arrested, but was released soon thereafter. Some observers believed his arrest was connected to his support for the creation of political parties, but the Government maintained that he was arrested in connection with a civil matter (see Section 1.e.). The Government reportedly harassed other individuals who signed the petition to form political parties.

Although not prohibited, there were no local human rights groups.

#### c. Freedom of Religion

Freedom of religion was restricted significantly. The Constitution designates the Sunni branch of Islam as the official state religion, and the Government interprets this provision to impose a requirement that citizens be Muslims. The law prohibits the practice of any religion other than Islam. Foreign residents are allowed to practice their religion if they do so privately and do not encourage citizens to participate. President Gayoom repeatedly stated that no other religion should be allowed in the country, and the Home Affairs Ministry announced special programs to safeguard and strengthen religious unity. The President, the members of the People's Majlis, and cabinet members must be Muslims.

There were no places of worship for adherents of other religions. The Government prohibits the import of icons and religious statues, but it generally permits the import of individual religious literature, such as Bibles, for personal use. It also prohibits non-Muslim clergy and missionaries from proselytizing and conducting public worship services. Conversion of a Muslim to another faith is a violation of Shari'a and may result in punishment. In the past, would-be converts have been detained and counseled regarding their conversion from Islam. Foreigners have been detained and expelled for proselytizing in the past. Unlike previous years, there were no reports of foreigners detained for proselytizing.

Islamic instruction is a mandatory part of the school curriculum, and the Government funds the salaries of religious instructors. The Government has established a Supreme Council of Islamic Affairs to provide guidance on religious matters. The Government also sets standards for individuals who conduct Friday services at mosques.

Under the country's Islamic practice, certain legal provisions discriminate against women (see Sections 1.e., 3, and 5).

For a more detailed discussion, see the [2003 International Religious Freedom Report](http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2003/27948pf.htm).

#### d. Freedom of Movement Within the Country, Foreign Travel, Emigration, and Repatriation

The law provides for these rights, and the Government generally respected them in practice. Citizens are free to travel at home and abroad, to emigrate, and to return. Foreign workers often were housed at their worksites. Their ability to travel freely was restricted, and they were not allowed to mingle with the local population on the islands.

The law does not provide for the granting of asylum and/or refugee status to persons who meet the definition in the 1951 U.N. Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees and its 1967 Protocol. The Government has not formulated a policy regarding refugees or asylees. The Government has cooperated in the past with the office of

the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees; however, asylum issues did not arise during the year. The Government provides protection against refoulement, but did not routinely grant refugee status or asylum.

### Section 3 Respect for Political Rights: The Right of Citizens to Change Their Government

Under the Constitution, the citizens' ability to change their government is limited, and the strong executive exerts significant influence over both the legislature and the judiciary. Under the Constitution, the Majlis chooses a single presidential nominee, who must be a Sunni Muslim male, from a list of self-announced candidates for the nomination. Would-be nominees for president are not permitted to campaign for the nomination. The nominee is then confirmed or rejected by secret ballot in a nationwide referendum. From a field of four candidates, President Gayoom was nominated unanimously by the Majlis and was confirmed by referendum on October 17 for a sixth 5-year term. Observers from the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) said the referendum was conducted in a free and fair manner.

By both law and custom, the Office of the President is the most powerful political institution in the country. The Constitution gives Shari'a preeminence over civil law and designates the President as the "supreme authority to propagate the tenets" of Islam. The President also was Commander in Chief of the armed forces, the Minister of Defense and National Security, the Minister of Finance and Treasury, and the Governor of the Maldivian Monetary Authority. The President's authority to appoint 8 of the 50 members of the Majlis provided the President strong political leverage. The elected members of the Majlis, who must be Muslims, serve 5-year terms. All citizens over 21 years of age may vote. Individuals or groups were free to approach members of the Majlis with grievances or opinions on proposed legislation, and any member may introduce legislation. There were no political parties, which were officially discouraged (see Section 2.b.).

The Government may introduce legislation but may not enact a bill into law without the Majlis' approval. The Majlis may enact legislation into law without presidential assent if the President fails to act on the proposal within 30 days or if a bill is repassed with a two-thirds majority. In recent years, the Majlis has become somewhat more independent, sometimes cautiously challenging government policies and rejecting government-proposed legislation, though there were no reports of this during the year.

For the past several years, the Majlis has held a question period during which members may query government ministers about public policy. Debate on the floor since the question period was instituted has become increasingly open.

Elections to the People's Majlis were held in 1999. According to SAARC observers, the 1999 elections were "free and fair in accordance with the relevant laws and regulations of the Republic of the Maldives." A by-election with 38 percent participation was held in April 2002 following the expulsion of M.P. Mohammed Nasheed from the Majlis upon his conviction for petty theft (see Section 2.b.). According to observers, the election was generally free and fair.

There were 5 women in the 50-member Majlis. There was one woman in the Cabinet. Women are not eligible to become president but may hold other government posts. However, for reasons of tradition and culture, relatively few women sought or were selected for public office. In October 2002, a woman was named High Commissioner to Sri Lanka, the first woman to hold the office. In 2001, Haseena Moosa became the first woman Atoll Chief. In the 1999 elections, two women were elected, and President Gayoom appointed an additional three women to the Majlis.

### Section 4 Governmental Attitude Regarding International and Nongovernmental Investigation of Alleged Violations of Human Rights

Although not prohibited, no local human rights groups existed in the country. However, during his November inaugural address, President Gayoom announced his intention to establish a Human Rights Commission, which was created by Presidential decree on December 10. Beyond a general intent to "safeguard the civil rights enshrined in the Constitution" and "protect and promote human rights," the Commission's mandate, composition, and independence were not defined. The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) visited the country in 2002 and during the current year; however, the ICRC has kept confidential its assessment of the situation.

### Section 5 Discrimination Based on Race, Sex, Disability, Language, or Social Status

The Constitution provides for the equality of all citizens before the law, but there is no specific provision to prohibit discrimination based on race, sex, religion, disability, or social status. Women traditionally have been

disadvantaged, particularly in terms of the application of Shari'a, in matters such as divorce, education, inheritance, and testimony in legal proceedings. There were no reports of official or societal discrimination against people with HIV/AIDS.

## Women

Women's rights advocates agreed that domestic violence and other forms of violence against women were not widespread. There were no firm data on the extent of violence against women because of the value attached to privacy. Police officials reported that they received few complaints of assaults against women. Rape and other violent crimes against women were extremely rare. Under Shari'a the penalty for rape is flogging, imprisonment for up to 5 years, or banishment.

Although women traditionally have played a subordinate role in society, they participate in public life in growing numbers and gradually are participating at higher levels (see Section 3). Women constitute 38 percent of government employees, and approximately 10 percent of uniformed NSS personnel. Women enjoyed a higher literacy rate (98 percent) than men (96 percent). Well-educated women maintained that cultural norms, not the law, inhibited women's education and career choices. A Gender Equality Council advised the Government on policies to help strengthen the role of women. During the year, the Government continued law literacy programs and workshops on gender and political awareness in the outer atolls to make women aware of their legal rights. The Government has built 15 women's centers where family health workers can provide medical services. The centers also provide libraries and space for activities focusing on the development of women. The minimum age of marriage for women is 18 years.

Under Islamic practice, husbands may divorce their wives more easily than vice versa, absent any mutual agreement to divorce. Shari'a also governs intestate inheritance, granting male heirs twice the share of female heirs. A woman's testimony is equal only to one-half of that of a man in matters involving adultery, finance, and inheritance (see Section 1.e.). Women who worked for wages received pay equal to that of men in the same positions.

## Children

Education is not compulsory, but there is universal access to free primary education. The percentage of school-age children in school in 2002 was: (grades 1 to 5) 99 percent; (grades 6 to 7) 95 percent; and (grades 8 to 10) 51 percent. Of the students enrolled, 49 percent were female and 51 percent were male. In many instances, education for girls was curtailed after the seventh grade, largely because parents do not allow girls to leave their home island for an island having a secondary school.

Children's rights are incorporated into law, which specifically protects them from both physical and psychological abuse, including abuse at the hands of teachers or parents. The Ministry of Women's Affairs and Social Welfare has the authority to enforce this law and received strong popular support for its efforts. Although unable to provide an exact number, the Ministry noted that there continued to be reports of child abuse during the year, including sexual abuse. Penalties for the sexual abuse of children range from up to 3 years' imprisonment to banishment. It was not known if there were any prosecutions for child abuse or child sexual abuse during the year.

Government policy provided for equal access to educational and health programs for both male and female children.

## Persons with Disabilities

There is no law that specifically addresses the rights of persons with physical or mental disabilities. In 1999, the Government initiated a survey that identified 30,000 persons with disabilities in the country (primarily hearing and visually impaired). The Government has established programs and provided services for persons with disabilities.

Families usually cared for persons with disabilities. When family care was unavailable, persons with disabilities were kept in the Institute for Needy People, which also assisted elderly persons. The Government provided free medication for all persons with mental disabilities in the islands, and mobile teams regularly visit patients with mental disabilities.

## Section 6 Worker Rights

a. The Right of Association

While the law does not expressly prohibit unions, it recognizes neither a worker's right to form or join them, nor the right to strike. Associations (such as industry associations and clubs) are allowed. In May, the Government enacted a new law to strengthen the legal regime governing voluntary, not-for-profit associations. Small groups of similarly employed workers with mutual interests have formed associations, some of which include employers as well as employees. These associations have not acted as trade unions.

In 1995, the U.S. Government suspended the country's eligibility for tariff preferences under the U.S. Generalized System of Preferences because the Government failed to take steps to afford internationally recognized worker rights to workers.

There has been no contact with the International Labor Organization to ratify its eight fundamental conventions.

b. The Right to Organize and Bargain Collectively

The law does not recognize workers' rights to organize and bargain collectively. Wages in the private sector are set by contract between employers and employees and are usually based on the rates for similar work in the public sector.

There were no reports of efforts to form unions or of strikes during the year.

There are no export processing zones.

c. Prohibition of Forced or Bonded Labor

The law does not prohibit forced or bonded labor, including by children, and there were no reports that such practices occurred.

d. Status of Child Labor Practices and Minimum Age for Employment

The law bars children less than 14 years of age from paid or hazardous work. In May, the Government introduced new guidelines prohibiting employment of children under 18 by the Government and in hazardous jobs such as construction, carpentry, welding, and driving. According to the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions, child labor remained a problem, primarily in agriculture, fishing and small commercial activities, including in family enterprises. There were no reports of children being employed in the industrial sector. The working hours of young workers were not limited specifically by statute. A Unit for Children's Rights in the Ministry of Women's Affairs and Social Welfare is responsible for monitoring compliance with the child labor regulations, but it is not charged with their enforcement. The Ministry of Employment and Labor's Dispute Settlement Unit deals with child labor issues.

e. Acceptable Conditions of Work

There was no national minimum wage for the private sector, although the Government has established wage floors for certain kinds of work such as government employment. These wage floors, or minimum standards, provided a decent standard of living for a worker and family. Given the severe shortage of labor, employers offered competitive pay and conditions to attract skilled workers.

There were no statutory provisions for hours of work, but the regulations require that a work contract specify the normal work and overtime hours on a weekly or monthly basis. The public sector provides a 7-hour day and a 5-day workweek.

There are no national laws governing health and safety conditions. There are regulatory requirements in certain industries such as construction and transport that employers provide a safe working environment and ensure the observance of safety measures. It was unclear whether workers could remove themselves from unsafe working conditions without risking the loss of their jobs. The Ministry of Human Resources, Employment, and Labor's Labor Dispute Settlement Unit resolves wage and labor disputes, visits worksites and enforces labor regulations.

f. Trafficking in Persons



The law does not prohibit trafficking in persons, and there were no reports that persons were trafficked to, from, or within the country.